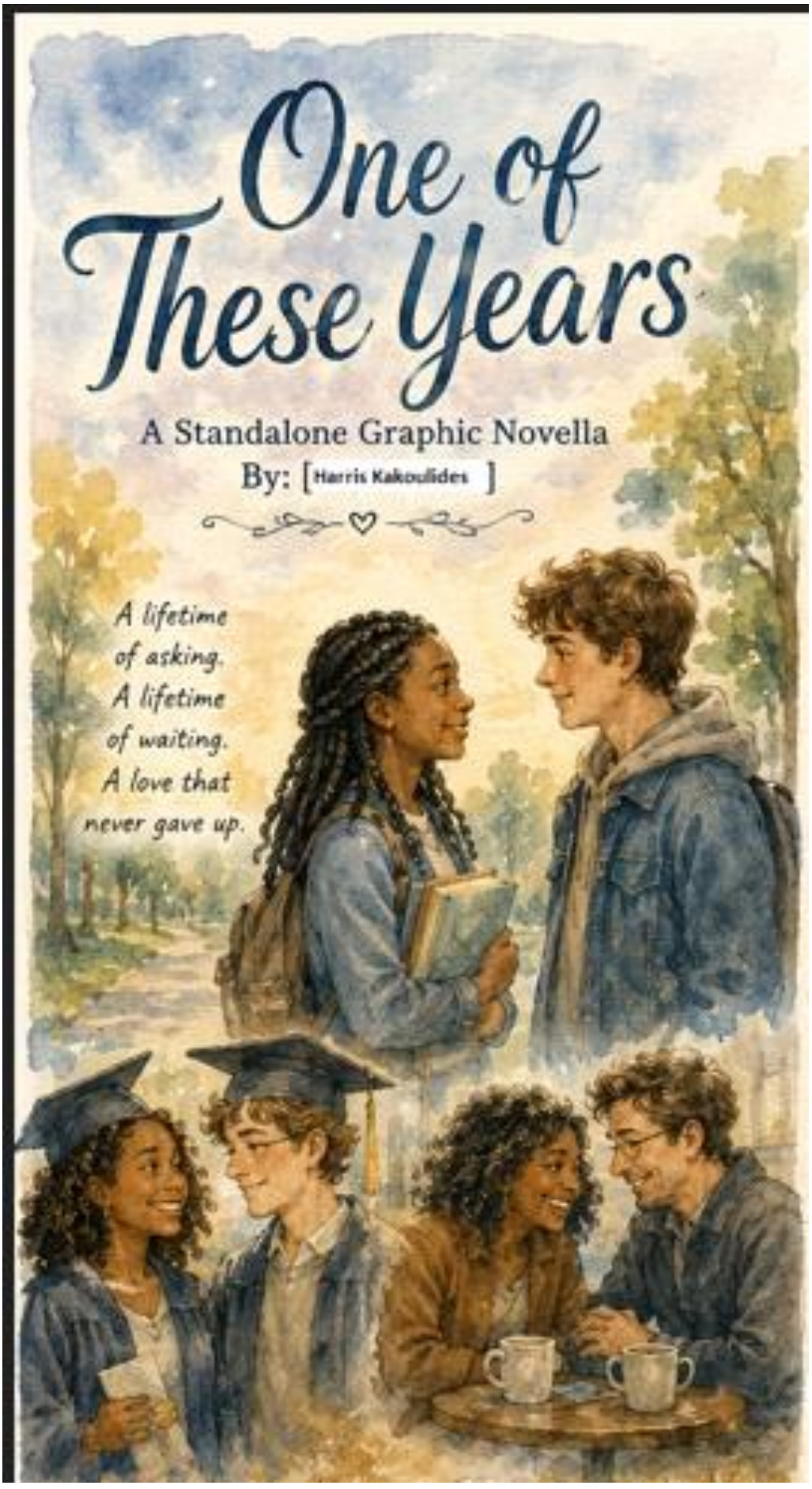

One of These Years
A Standalone Graphic Novella
By: [Harris Kakoulides]
A lifetime of asking. A lifetime of waiting. A love that never gave up.

Some love stories
aren't measured
in days or years...
but in a lifetime.

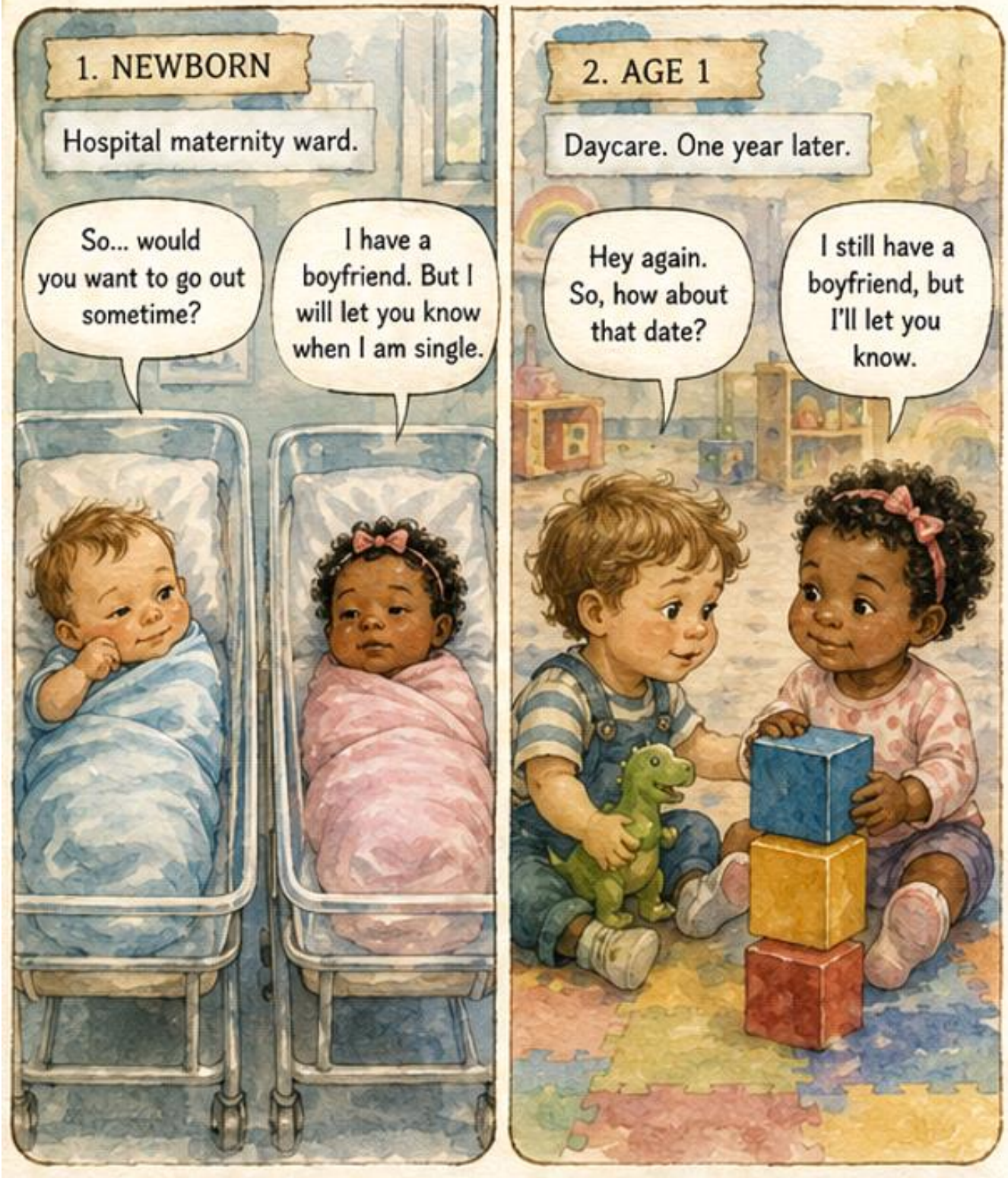
1. NEWBORN
Hospital Maternity Ward.
So... would you want to go out sometime?
I have a boyfriend. But I will let you know when I am single.

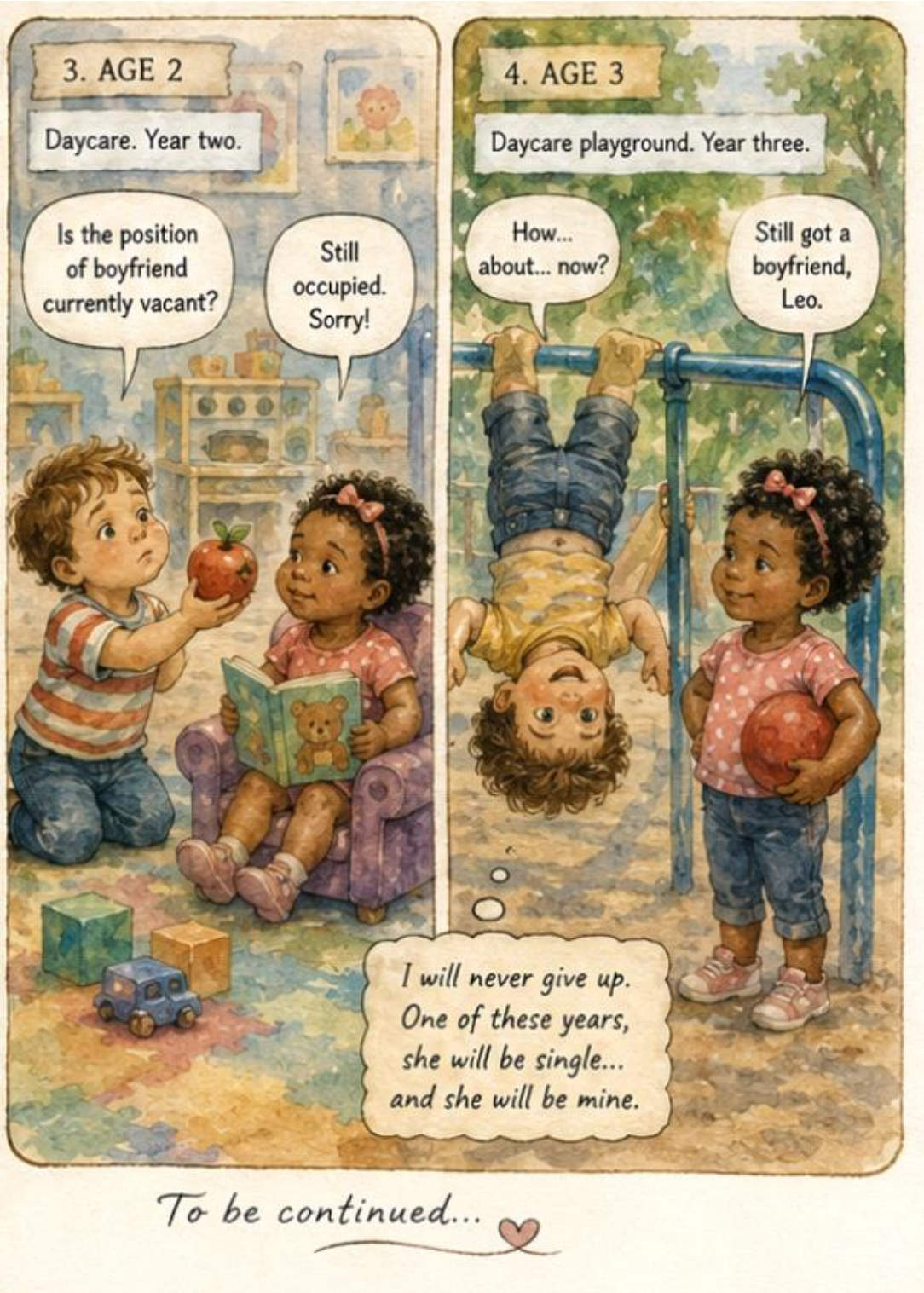
1. NEWBORN
Hospital maternity ward.
So... would you want to go out sometime?
I have a boyfriend. But I will let you know when I am single.
2.
3.
4.

PAGE 1:

INFANCY TO AGE 3

A lifetime of "no"... for a reason neither of them knew yet.


1. NEWBORN
Hospital maternity ward.
So... would you want to go out sometime?
I have a boyfriend. But I will let you know when I am single.
2. AGE 1
Daycare. One year later.
Hey again. So, how about that date?
I still have a boyfriend, but I'll let you know.


3. AGE 2
Daycare. Year two.
Is the position of boyfriend currently vacant?
Still occupied. Sorry!
4. AGE 3
Daycare playground. Year three.
How... about... now?
Still got a boyfriend, Leo.
I will never give up. One of these years, she will be single... and she will be mine.

To be continued...

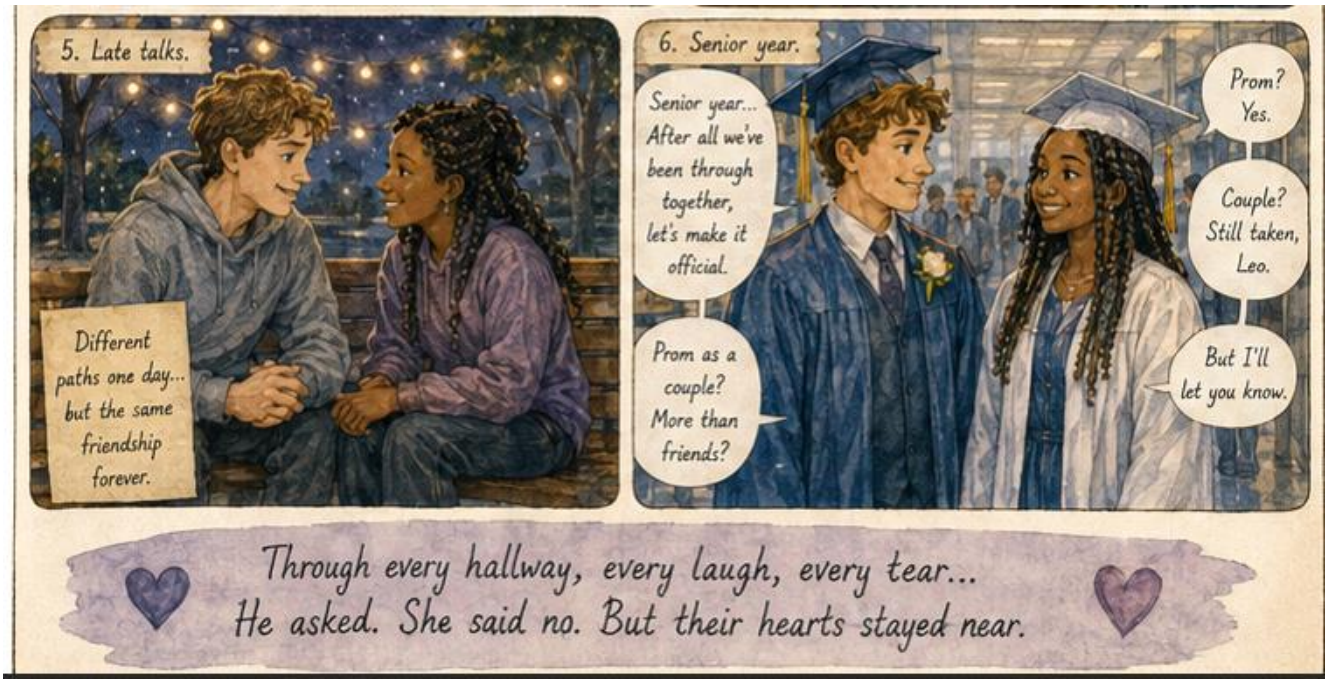
PAGE 2: THE SCHOOL YEARS
The years fly by... but his question never changes.
1. AGE 4
Daycare graduation.
CONGRATS!
New milestone, new chances? Date?
Still taken!
2. AGE 5
Pre-K, circle time.
Be Kind
Now that we're officially in school... thoughts on dinner and juice boxes?
My boyfriend says hi, Leo.
3. AGE 10
5th Grade graduation.
We are leaving our childhood behind. Let's start middle school as a couple.
Have a great summer, Leo! (And still no).
MIDDLE SCHOOL NEXT!
4. AGE 13
8th Grade dance.
Winter Dance
May I have this dance... and your hand in courtship?
Dance? Yes. Courtship? Still taken.

5. AGE 15
High school freshman year.
So, Maya. New school, new era. I've been asking you this since the literal day we were born...
Will you finally go out with me?
Leo, I genuinely admire the dedication. But I still have a boyfriend. I promise, I'll let you know the second I'm single.
I can wait. I've got nothing but time.
BIOLOGY
Different classes. Same friendship. Same answer.

Her dad and mom are okay of you two being friends but they will not ever approve of you two being together.
That is why I think she always says she has a boyfriend.
Love has no color and she will one day be mine.

PAGE 4: HIGH SCHOOL – NEW SCHOOL, SAME QUESTION
Some bonds never break. Some questions never stop.
1. AGE 15 – Freshman year.
New school, new era. I've been asking you this since the literal day we were born...
Will you finally go out with me?
Leo, I genuinely admire the dedication.
But I still have a boyfriend.
I promise, I'll let you know the second I'm single.
History
2. Study partners.
Always together.

3. Game nights.
Best friends. Always.
4. School projects.
CLEAN WATER FOR ALL
Same dreams. Same heart.


5. Late talks.
Different paths one day... but the same friendship forever.
6. Senior year.
Senior year... After all we've been through together, let's make it official.
Prom as a couple? More than friends?
Prom? Yes.
Couple? Still taken, Leo.
But I'll let you know.
Through every hallway, every laugh, every tear...
He asked. She said no. But their hearts stayed near.

PAGE 5: SENIOR MOMENTS & GOODBYES

One more chapter of school... countless memories to last a lifetime.

1. Prom night.
This dance... this night... Will you let me make it more than a memory?
It's perfect as it is, Leo.
Still have a boyfriend.
2. Graduation day.
We did it. Now we can write our own story.
Will you finally be in it with me?
You're already in all of my stories.
But I still have a boyfriend.
3. Last day of high school.
So... after all the years, all the moments...
One day, you'll say yes?
One day, Leo.
I promise.
4. Time moves forward.
2016
2018
2020
2022
Years pass. Memories grow. The question remains.

5. The next chapter begins.
Different colleges. Different cities. Long distance...
But before we go, one more time.
Will you go out with me?
Distance won't change us.
But my answer won't change either.
Still have a boyfriend.
Dear Leo,
Thank you... for being my constant. My best friend. My safe place. I may not say yes today. But I hope you always know how much you mean to me.
Love always,
Maya
They said goodbye to school, but not to each other...
The story continues.

PAGE 6: DREAMS TAKE SHAPE
Different paths. Same hearts.
1. COLLEGE DECISIONS.
I'm thinking about studying environmental science.
That's amazing! I want to study medicine.
2. BIG DREAMS.
Maybe I'll work on clean energy solutions.
Maybe I'll be a doctor who helps communities in need.
We didn't know then how far our dreams would take us.

PAGE 3: ADULTHOOD AND THE UNBROKEN ROUTINE
Different places, different dreams... same answer.
1. AGE 22
College graduation.
We did it! College is over. Real world is next. Want to start it together?
Study buddies.
2. AGE 25
Early careers.
Promotions, paychecks, adulting... How about dinner that isn't Instant Noodles?
Still have a boyfriend.
COFFEE
Latte
Cappuccino
Mocha
Volunteering together.

3. GOODBYE FOR NOW.
We'll write, okay?
Every week. Promise.
I promise.
4. FIRST SEMESTER.
New classes.
New people.
Now everything.
Hard days.
Exciting days.
One goal.

5. LATE NIGHT CALLS.
Hey, future doctor.
Hey, future scientist.
Distance didn't feel so big when our hearts stayed close.
6. HOLIDAYS HOME.
Feels like no time has passed.
Some things never change.
Some things shouldn't.
We were growing into our futures... together.

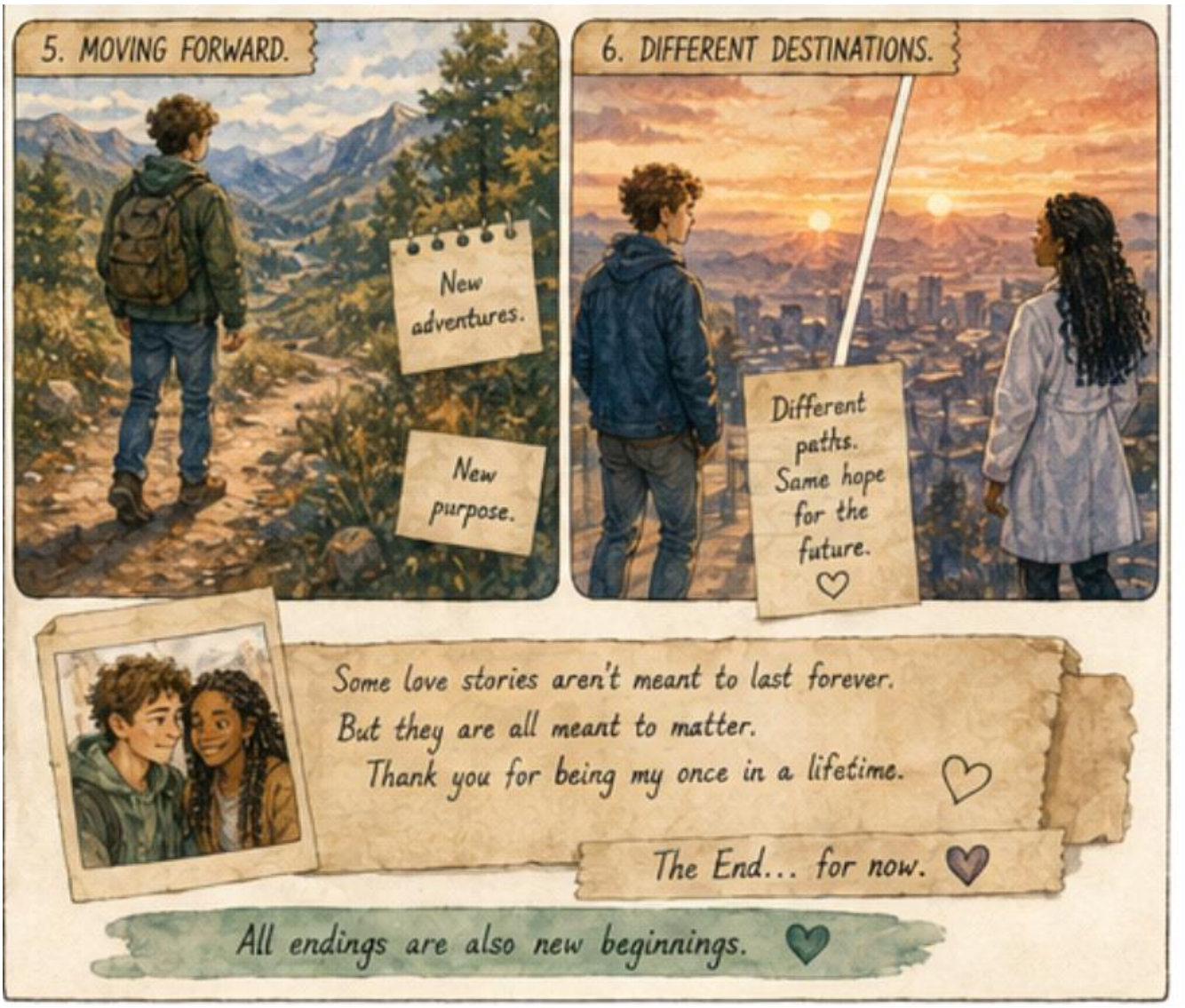
PAGE 7: THE CRACKS BEGIN

Time, pressure, and distance... small things that slowly add up.

1. BUSY SEASONS.
So much to do...
So much responsibility...
2. MISSED CALLS.
Maya
Missed Call (2)
3. SHORTER CONVERSATIONS.
Hey... how was your day?
It was... fine. Just really busy. I've got to hit the books.
Yeah, me too.

4. DIFFERENT WORLDS.
Field study in Colorado.
Overnight shift at the hospital.
Same stars.
Different skies.
♡

PAGE 8: THE CHOICE
Every story reaches a turning point.
1. THE TALK.
Maya, we need to talk.
I've been thinking the same thing.
2. HONEST WORDS.
I still care about you... but I can't keep waiting for a maybe.
I know.
3. TEARS AND TRUTH.
The hardest goodbyes are the ones between two people who still love each other.
4. LETTING GO.
I'll always be grateful for you.
You too, Leo. You'll always be in my story.


5. MOVING FORWARD.
New adventures.
New purpose.
6. DIFFERENT DESTINATIONS.
Different paths. Same hope for the future.
Some love stories aren't meant to last forever.
But they are all meant to matter.
Thank you for being my once in a lifetime.
The End... for now.
All endings are also new beginnings.

2. NEW APARTMENT.

3. GROWING PAINS.
I've been stressed and short with you.
I know. I miss us.
I'm sorry.
Let's talk, really talk.
4. FINDING OUR CENTER.
Step back. Breathe. Remember what matters.
Us. Always.

PAGE 9: BUILDING US

It's not about the big moments. It's about choosing each other... every day.

5. SIMPLE JOYS.
Best pasta chef around.
Only for you.
6. PLANS FOR TOMORROW.
Someday... our own clinic?
Helping communities. Together.
Big dreams. Same team.
We weren't perfect. We just kept choosing love.
Again and again.

PAGE 10: LIFE'S TWISTS

Not every chapter goes as planned. But love isn't about perfect paths...
it's about walking through the storms together.

1. UNEXPECTED NEWS.
My mom's sick.
I'll be with you through all of it.
2. BIG DECISIONS.
JOB OFFER DENVER
RESEARCH PROGRAM OUT OF STATE
What do we want our life to look like?

5. NEW CHAPTER.
This is scary.
But we're doing it together.
6. STRONGER THAN BEFORE.
We've been through so much.
And we've chosen each other every step of the way.
Life will test you. Love will steady you.
Together, you can handle anything.

PAGE 11: OUR STORY

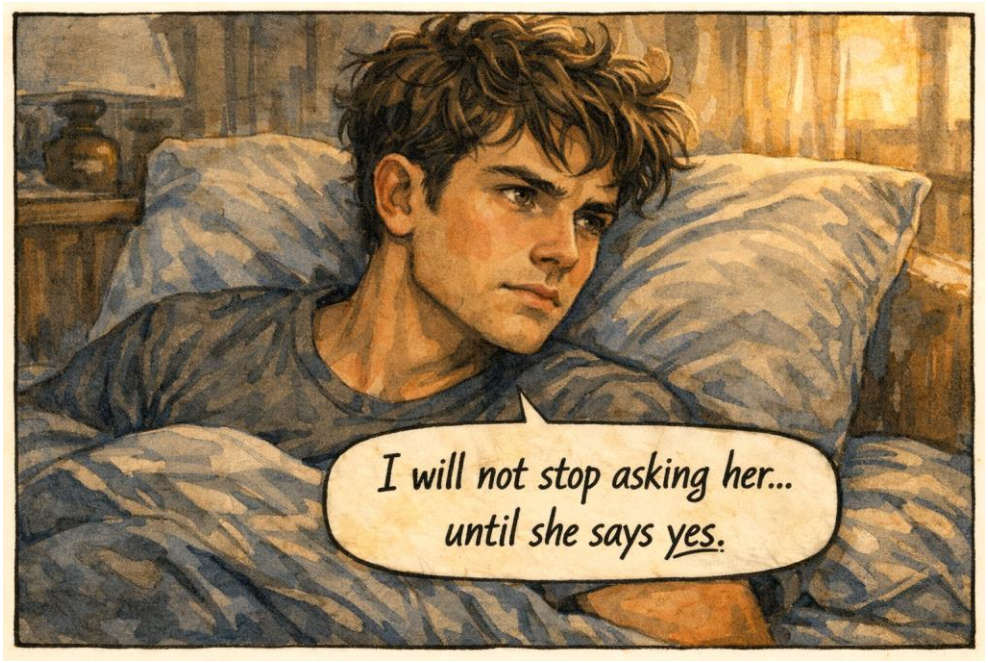
This is our story. Still being written.

1. OUR HOME.
Home isn't a place. it's us.

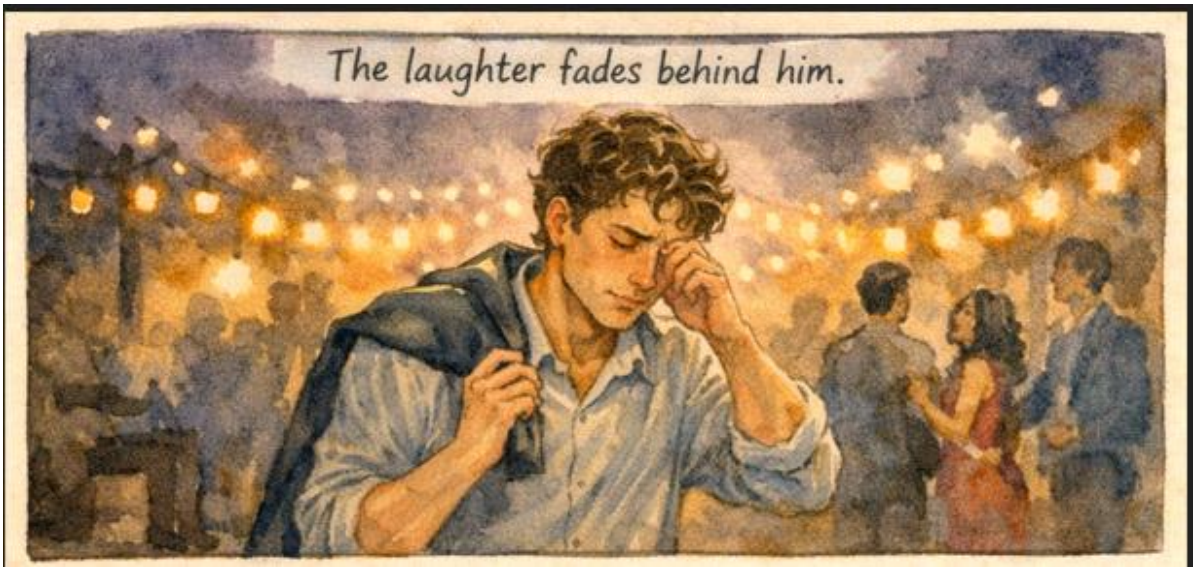
3. LOOKING AHEAD.
There's still so much more we want to do.
More love. More impact. More adventures.

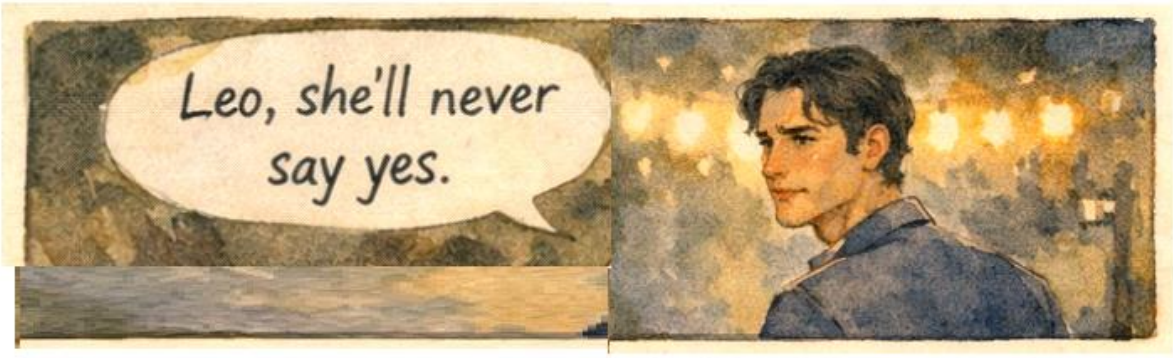
4. OUR PROMISE.
No matter what comes, I choose you.
I choose you too.
5. FOREVER AND BEYOND.
Different seasons.
Different chapters.
Same love... always.
Dear whoever finds this someday,
Love isn't about having the perfect story.
It's about showing up. It's about listening.
It's about choosing each other — through the good,
the hard, the uncertain, and the beautiful.
We wrote our story together.
Now it's your turn.
With all our love,
Leo & Maya
The end... is just the beginning.

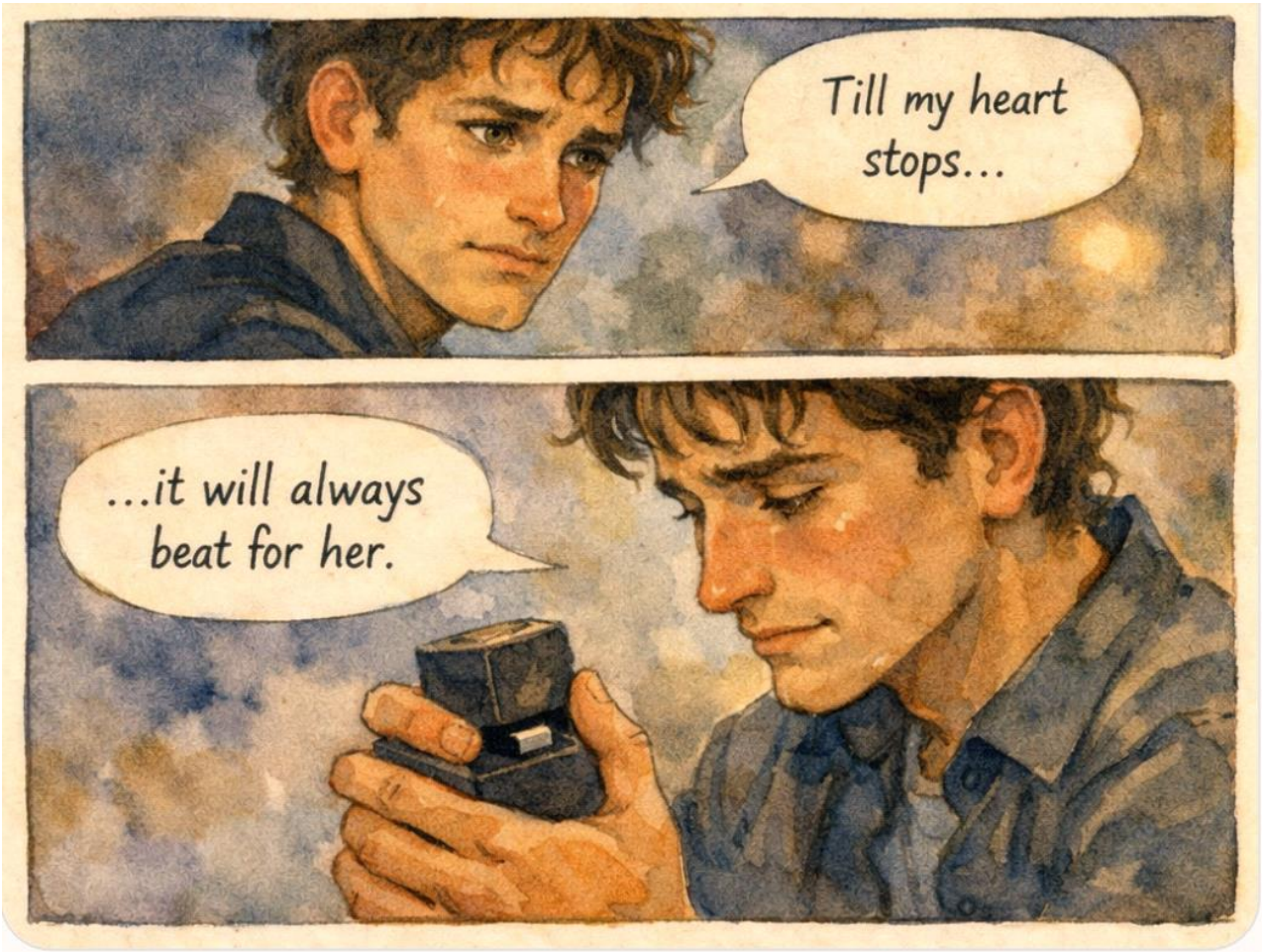
THE AWAKENING
Here's to us
It felt so real, like it was always meant to be...
I miss her so much.


I will not stop asking her... until she says yes.

3. AGE 28
Weddings of friends.
Everyone's settling down. My turn, maybe?
Leo... still taken.
Always laughing.


The laughter fades behind him.


Leo, she'll never say yes.


Till my heart stops...
...it will always beat for her.

4. AGE 31
Life keeps moving.
Thirty-one and still waiting on my yes.
My boyfriend sends his regards.
Music, dreams, and talks that last for hours.

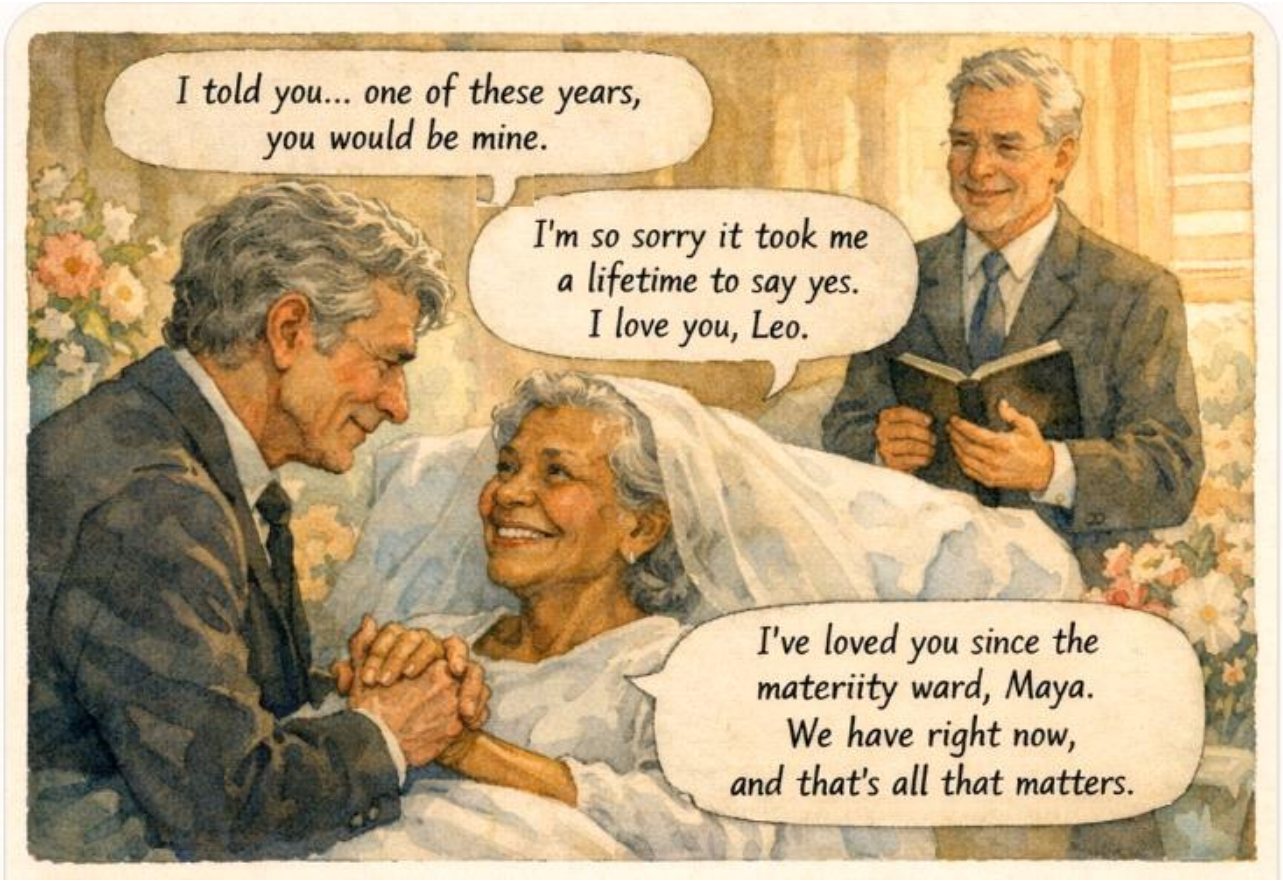
My heart only beats for one — and it is not you.
Forget her, we could start a future together. Leave your devotion to her.

5. AGE 40
Through every season.
Forty years of asking. Still the same answer.
And still the same you.
Adventure partners.
Cooking disasters.
Every holiday.
Through it all.
Some things never change. Some things only grow stronger.

Half a century, Maya. I'm starting to think this "boyfriend" of yours might be fictional.
Oh, he's very real, Leo. And very stubborn.
I'm not giving up, you know. One of these years, you'll be single, and you'll be mine.
I know you won't...

Maya... what did the doctor say?
It's cancer, Leo. Advanced. They said... there isn't much time left.
There was never a boyfriend, Leo. I made him up when we were babies...
because my parents were deeply racist. I was so scared of losing them, but I was even more scared of losing you.

I always knew...
That's why I couldn't give up.
Even though at times I was close.


I told you... one of these years, you would be mine.
I'm so sorry it took me a lifetime to say yes. I love you, Leo.
I've loved you since the materiity ward, Maya. We have right now, and that's all that matters.

The Story Lives On

Leo and Maya are fictional. But for some people with disabilities, the dilemma they faced feels familiar.

Maya spent a lifetime believing that outside pressures made it impossible to marry the person she loved. Today, some people who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) say they face a different kind of pressure. They worry that marriage could reduce or eliminate benefits they depend on, forcing them to weigh financial security against their desire to build a life together.

No one should have to choose between love and stability. Whether or not readers agree on how the law should change, the question is worth asking:

Should public policy make marriage harder for people with disabilities than it is for everyone else?

"One of These Years" is a story about hope, patience, and love. If it also encourages a conversation about removing unnecessary barriers to marriage for people with disabilities, then Leo and Maya's story continues to have meaning beyond its final page.